

Homeland Redefined: Spaces of National Belonging

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Tales of reconciliation and eventual peace shine through our global history, glimmering examples that are often overshadowed by international focus on protracted, violent, existential conflicts. The conflict in Israel-Palestine is conventionally defined as such¹. Often, this conflict between the residents of the area of land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is considered unsolvable, irreconcilable. Typical sentiment portrays Palestinians and Israelis as existing within a centuries-old, never ending cycle of irrational violence. Palestinian Jews, Muslims and Christians lived peacefully under Ottoman rule; only recently did a distinct trend of exclusiveness develop and become interwoven in the social, political and cultural fabric of both societies. While there are many overarching international economic, political, cultural, and religious influences on the current situation of the conflict, this paper focuses on nationalism and its influence on identity and conflict.

Since the rise of Zionism as a force of Jewish nationalism in the historic land of Israel and the concurrent expansion of Palestinian nationalism, the people who identified with the nationalities formed and strengthened identities based on shared history, language, and culture. One significant focus found in both Palestinian and Israeli identities is the concept of the homeland. For Israelis, the homeland, epitomized in the commonly used phrase *Ha Aretz* (literally “the land”, but used as an equivalent to “the State of Israel”), is perceived as a land rooted in historical and religious

¹ Bar-Tal, Daniel, “Why Does Fear Override Home in societies Engulfed by Intractable Conflict, as it does in the Israeli Society?” *Political Psychology* 22.3 (2001), 601-627.

significance, a place of refuge and national revival. For Palestinians, the homeland is a historical and religious space, yearned for but unattainable. Physical connection to the land is a core cultural belief based on the agricultural past and urban centers of Palestinian society. A narrative of remembrance, indigenous continuity, survival and return to the land defines their national struggle.

The most concrete aspect of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is the physical land. The battle over territory began even before Israel was declared a state with the arrival of Zionist Jewish settlers, the end of the British Mandate, and the UN Partition Plan of 1947. Since this time, both Zionism and Palestinian nationalisms have altered their collective definitions of national boundaries². A many adherents to Zionism believe the Land of Israel spans from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, while many accept more constrained borders, such as without Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For many Palestinians, the homeland is also conceived as the entire territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Like Israelis, many Palestinians have accepted that the future borders of a Palestinian state may be limited to areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It is apparent that a distinction between political boundaries and conceptions of a homeland exist. It is also clear that

² Falah, Ghazi and David Newman, "The Spatial Manifestation of Threat: Israelis and Palestinians Seek a 'Good' Border," Political Geography 12.8 (1995), 689-706, 12 Sept. 2007.

within the context of national-group desires and political aspirations, the definition of homeland boundaries overlap³.

It is within the context of political-state borders and national-homeland construction that the conflict of exclusion arises. Both Palestinians and Israelis have denied the legitimacy of the “other’s” ties to the land while asserting their rightful ownership and expanding collective identities that promote this notion. The foundation of denying the “other” from the land, whether from the conception of homeland or from the actual state, is where the zero-sum⁴ nature of the conflict is derived⁵. In this way, the identities attached to the same land have continuously affirmed and institutionalized the exclusion of the “other” by perceiving the “other” as a threat to their connection to the land.

It is this element of exclusiveness that has aided the continuation of hostility between Israelis and Palestinians. This and other aspects of the conflict—such as issues of limited resources, displaced persons, sovereignty, and power—evidence the necessity of conflict resolution and reconciliation. Current political trends overwhelmingly favor what is called the “two-state” solution. This solution is based on the premise that Palestinians and Israelis are unwilling or unable to coexist on the same

³ Yiftachel, Oren. “Territory as the Kernel of the Nation: Space, Time and Nationalism in Israel/Palestine.” Geopolitics 7.2 (2002), 215-248, 13 Sept. 2007.

⁴ Kelman, Herbert C. “The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts.” Journal of Social Issues 55.3 (1999), 581-600. 19 July 2007.

⁵ Newman, David and Ghazi Falah, “Bridging the Gap: Palestinian and Israeli Discourses on Autonomy and Statehood,” Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, 22.1 (1997). 16 Sept. 2007.

piece of land. It also presupposes the notion that both groups are prepared to reduce their concept of “homeland” in favor of a political state. This solution is one that focuses on conflict resolution—that is, the process used to ensure that conflicts between opposing parties are resolved peacefully⁶. However, in ignoring an essential aspect of both Israeli and Palestinian national identities, the concept of homeland, the potential of the two-state solution is weakened.

By recognizing the significance of the concept of homeland and the politics of exclusion that have developed between the Palestinians and Israelis, it is apparent that components of identity that serve to continue the conflict must be reevaluated. Identity transcendence is one means of conflict reconciliation that recognizes the power of identity. The development of a transcendent identity that encompasses both Israelis and Palestinians is “a necessary condition for effective cooperation, long-term peaceful coexistence, and ultimate reconciliation between the two people”⁷. A redefinition of the homeland can encourage this process of reconciliation.

Throughout this paper, the term “Israeli” implies the people that identify as a member of the Zionist-Israeli community within or outside of the state of Israel. This does not include citizens of Israel who identify as Palestinian or non- Zionist. The term “Palestinian” is understood as the people who identify as a member of the Palestinian

⁶ Bar-Tal, Daniel and Gemma H Bennink, “Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process,” In Y Bar-Simon-Tov, Ed. From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004, 11-38.

⁷ Kelman, Herbert C. “The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts.” Journal of Social Issues 55.3 (1999), 19 July 2007, 586.

national community, including those who do not live within the West Bank or Gaza Strip.

This paper will review important concepts of national collective identity formation and nationalism in Israel/Palestine, focusing on the construction of the homeland. It will then analyze Palestinian and Israeli national narratives and construction of attachment to the land. Using this as a basis, I will consider how the definition of a territorial homeland supports exclusion, and suggest that exclusion of the “other” is unnecessary. A redefinition of the concept of homeland is then discussed as a means of moving past elements that support the continuation of the conflict.

Homeland Nationalism

Of the differences between Israelis and Palestinians, the most critical struggle is the claim for the same geo-political land. For many Palestinians and Israelis, nationalism is not just a fluttering flag or a national anthem sung during special occasions. Rather, it is a central concept that informs personal and collective identities and the shape of society itself. Benedict Anderson, often cited as a primary source for defining the nation from a political science perspective, states that a nation is “an imagined political community”⁸. He further details that these communities form their group identity through means of linguistics, literature, culture, and territory. This action of developing the nation, nationalism, can be defined as a “constant process of

⁸ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1993, 6.

building collective imaginations about the commonality of the nation”⁹. Therefore, nationalism is a method of developing the collective identity of a group of people who define themselves as a nation. Conscious membership, intentional development and the social construction of a nation often, and particularly in the case of Israel/Palestine, leads to exclusion of the “other’s” national claims.

Maintaining group membership that promotes exclusion can result in efforts encouraging the belief of one group’s legitimacy over the “other”. It is typically a goal of nationalism to establish that the nation has always existed, and “through the use of symbols, memories, myths, heritage, the attempt is to trace the (constructed) genealogy of an identity group back to a specific place, time, and ancestor in order to derive an ideological lineage”¹⁰. Israeli and Palestinian nationalisms have developed deep-rooted ties to the territory of Israel/Palestine as an essential component of their national narrative through methods of history, collective past, religion and political ideology. In a study of space and nationalism, Oren Yiftachel states that Palestinians and Israelis “place great importance in grounding their national identity and claim in a specific location, which embodies their histories, memories, cultures, religions and desired futures”¹¹. The attachment to the historic land of Palestine/Israel as a component of identity is part of a constructed process, used to strengthen national ties and instill a

⁹ Yiftachel, 219.

¹⁰ Kinnvall, Catarina. “Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity and the Search for Ontological Security.” *Political Psychology* 25.5 (2004), 10 June 2007, 756.

¹¹ Yiftachel 216.

sense of belonging for a community that is expected to remain loyal to the nation¹².

These ties to the land and past of the nation are made concrete by the formation of official borders and control of the land¹³. Another result is the development of the concept of “homeland” by both Israelis and Palestinians.

In a study of existential dimensions of security, Kinnvall reveals an interesting definition of “home”, which can be applied similarly to the concept of homeland. She states that “home” is a foundation for identity construction, and has the “ability to link together a material environment with a deeply emotional set of meanings relating to permanence and continuity”¹⁴. A homeland is seen as a basis for strengthening the nation by supporting elements that create the national community. The homeland, while grounded in physical territory, has an essential emotional dimension that allows the nation to promote sentiments such as a sense of belonging, memory of space, feelings of historical continuity and possession of the land. Newman (2001), in a study of national territorial identities states:

The homeland is a territory within which the historical evolution of the group took place, within which place and space take on supernatural

¹² Newman, David. “From National to Post-National Territorial Identities in Israel-Palestine.” *GeoJournal* 53 (2001), 6 Sept. 2007, 238.

¹³ Newman, David. “Real Spaces, Symbolic Spaces: Interrelated Notions of Territory in the Arab-Israeli Conflict.” A Road Map to War: Territorial Dimensions of International Conflict. Ed. Paul F. Diehl. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999, 4.

¹⁴ Kinnvall 747.

dimensions and whose territory is perceived as being more important than the territory of the 'Other'”¹⁵.

Palestinian and Israelis have claimed the territory of Palestine/Israel, using emotional and political means. When a territory is caught between competing national narratives, such as in Israel/Palestine, each group strives to establish a primary claim through methods of historical and religious narratives, political control, and social exclusion. The aim is to prove legitimacy by asserting the national group's exclusive right and historical legacy to the land¹⁶. Using nationalism as a tool, Israeli and Palestinian collective communities have developed a similar ethos that emphasizes connection to a historic homeland and exclusive possession of this land.

The development of a national community is often used as a basis for exclusion of the “other”. Boundaries between the “inside” community of the nation versus the “outside” are developed: “the process of forming an assumed national community, with rigid and exclusive boundaries, implies the process of defining who is and is not a member of that community”¹⁷. Newman states: “other national groups are, at the best, perceived as alien residents or second-class citizens”¹⁸. Through national consciousness of physical boundaries, collective memories of past discrimination, and exclusive definitions of group belonging and legitimacy, nationalism can easily lead to existential

¹⁵ Newman (2001) 237.

¹⁶ Newman (1999) 12-13.

¹⁷ Weiss, Evan S. Palestinian and Israeli Nationalism: Identity Politics and Education in Jerusalem. New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004, 83.

¹⁸ Newman (1999), 15.

and territorial intragroup conflict, as it has in Israel/Palestine. Ironically, neither group has, historically or presently, retained exclusive control of this territory that is typically seen as a center of diversity.

In this discussion of nationalism and homeland, it is clear that the homeland territory constitutes a central position in national identity. In the following section, the development of Israeli and Palestinian nationalisms and construction of the homeland will be reviewed.

The “Land of Israel” Nationalism

In the late nineteenth century, Zionism as a Jewish nationalist movement was established. Theodor Herzl, considered a founding father of Zionism, believed that the solution to the “affliction of Jews,”¹⁹ primarily anti-Semitism in Europe, was the creation of a Jewish nation-state in the historic land of Israel²⁰. His book, entitled *Der Judenstaat* (The Jews’ State), was published in 1896 proposing this idea. This was followed by the first Zionist Congress, which established the official doctrine of Zionism: “to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law”²¹. To do this, the Zionist Congress decided to promote the settlement of Palestine, to strengthen the national consciousness of Jews globally, and to lobby governments to support the goals of

¹⁹ Don-Yehiya, Eliezer, “Zionism in Perspective,” *Modern Judaism* 18.3 (Oct. 1998), 20 Sept 2007, 2.

²⁰ Bickerton, Ian J. and Carla L. Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc, 2002, 24.

²¹ Bickerton and Klausner 24-25.

Zionism²². With this declaration, Zionism became a nationalist ideology, seeking to establish a state, and a homeland, for the Jewish-national group.

Jewish nationalism surfaced as a means to “revitalize the sense of collective identity and belonging to a ‘primordial’ nation that had eroded in the Jewish Diaspora”²³. It was Herzl’s dream that the Jewish state, the “Promised Land” would become home to Jews from all over the world who wanted to preserve their Jewish identity. His vision has been labeled “political Zionism” in its aims to create a physical state for a nation of Jews²⁴. Ahad Ha’Am, the father of “cultural Zionism,” promoted the aim of Zionism as unifying and preserving the nation of Jews for the state of Israel that Herzl sought to create²⁵. Together, the focus of Zionism became promoting unity and protection of the Jewish community while establishing a nation-state²⁶.

Eventually, both the political and cultural aspects of Zionism came to be accepted by the British, who at that time, had control over the land of Palestine. In 1917, the Balfour Declaration was issued, attesting to the support of the British government for the Zionist enterprise²⁷. This was followed by a period of mass

²² Bickerton and Klausner 25.

²³ Hammack, Phillip L. “Identity, Conflict, and Coexistence: Life Stories of Israeli and Palestinian Adolescents.” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 9.4 (July 2006), 15 Aug 2007, 331.

²⁴ Finkelstein, Norman G. *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (New York: Verso, 2001) 8.

²⁵ Don-Yehiya 1.

²⁶ Hammack 331.

²⁷ Shapira, Anita. “Zionism in the Age of Revolution.” *Modern Judaism* 18.3 (Oct. 1998), 217-226. 23 June 2007, 3.

European Jewish immigration to the land of Palestine and the subsequent tension with the native Palestinians²⁸.

In this brief history of Zionism as a nationalist movement, several aspects of nation building are apparent. First, the founders of Zionism established a need for nationalism in order to protect the global Jewish community from anti-Semitism, assimilation, and other threats to the existence of the Jewish nation. After the Nazi Holocaust, the fear of extinction became an even stronger component of memory of Jewish history: “according to this collective memory, throughout the centuries, Jews were exposed to continuous threats from the Greek and Roman eras...up to the present time²⁹”. This history formed the basis of Zionist claims of the necessity of a Jewish homeland, and was reinforced in the late 1940’s, while the UN Partition Plan was under contemplation. Jews in Palestine who had lived in relative peace with the Christian and Muslim Palestinians began to encounter outspoken resistance to their national project and the establishment of the state of Israel from Palestinian and Arab opposition. This created another layer in the state of existential fear in the newly founded Israeli-Zionist collective memory³⁰. The horror of the Holocaust intensified the fears of the Jewish community and made the prospect of Jewish annihilation seem probable.

²⁸ Khalidi, Rashid, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 114.

²⁹ Bar-Tal (2001) 611.

³⁰ Bar-Tal (2001), 611.

A second aspect of Zionist nation building is found in the promotion of the Jewish connection to the land of Israel. The roots of Jewish nationalism and claims to the “Promised Land” of Israel were established as leading back to Biblical times. Once Israel was established as a state, its Declaration of Independence clearly reflects the territorial focus of Jewish nationalism:

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here its spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped...After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Diaspora and never ceased to pray and hope for their return. By virtue of our natural and historic right we hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel³¹.

The “natural and historic” claims to the land grounds Zionist nationalism to the religious and historical Land of Israel, thereby establishing it as a homeland for the Jewish people. The concept of an ancient, promised, Jewish homeland was strengthened as part of the national project by a process of territorial socialization³². With the realization of the Zionist goal of the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel, this emotional concept of the homeland became political reality in May, 1948.

These two major factors of Zionist nation-building lay the foundations for exclusion of the “other”, “the symbols of statehood were uniquely Jewish and Zionist,

³¹ Preamble to the *Declaration of Independence*, State of Israel, May 1948

³² Newman (1999) 14.

while notions of territorial attachment and spatial exclusivity were an important part of the educational and socialization process promoted by the State"³³. In a detailed study of Palestinian and Israeli education systems and the role that education plays in national identity, Evan Weiss concludes that:

Israel teaches its children that they are part of a primordial national community, the Jews, with a historic homeland and a historic language. Outside of that homeland, they were an unwanted minority...the only solution to these problems was to find redemption in their homeland and build a state of their own, a state that protects them from persecution. But Israeli children learn that in building that state, they encountered an unpredictable and irrational enemy, the Arabs...³⁴

By claiming the oldest historical presence in the land, some Zionists reject any other claims to the space. Establishing control of a contested land entails denying other claims to the land: "the Other's history, place and political aspirations are presented as a menacing package to be thoroughly rejected"³⁵. Therefore, Zionism developed as ethno-religious nationalism with an exclusive territorial claim: "Zionist space was to be 'pure', attempting to maximize both Jewish control and exclusivity"³⁶.

³³ Newman, David. "Citizenship, Identity and Location: the Changing Discourse of Israeli Geopolitics," *Geopolitical Traditions* 2000, 6.

³⁴ Weiss, 82.

³⁵ Yiftachel 227.

³⁶ Yiftachel 224.

Palestine Homeland Nationalism

The history of Palestinian nationalism follows closely the global rise of nation building after World War I. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the area that had been known as the historical land of Palestine came to be officially defined and demarcated as Palestine by the British, who had gained mandate control of the land³⁷. A collective consciousness began to form within the community of Arabs of Palestine, following a trend of Arab nationalism and motivated by a shared local culture³⁸. The formation of Palestinian nationalism was also influenced by the administrative control of the British. This was perceived as a form of colonialism, and “did much to cement a sense of community and belonging, and to spur patriotic feelings regarding Palestine”³⁹. Further, the borders of Palestine, as set by the British Mandate, became the boundaries imagined by many in the Palestinian national community as the “homeland” of Palestine⁴⁰.

Palestinian nationalism developed with a strong sense of territorial belonging. Land held an important place in this culture; land was the basis of Palestine’s agricultural society, and this territorial attachment was supported by religious beliefs and local community consciousness⁴¹. For many Palestinians, the land is “filled with

³⁷ Khalidi, 149.

³⁸ Yiftachel, 224.

³⁹ Khalidi, 152.

⁴⁰ Falah and Newman, 692.

⁴¹ Khalidi, 152-153.

sites, locations and myths that form an integral part of national identity formation”⁴².

Rashid Khalidi, in his well-known book on Palestinian nationalism, details the foundations of Palestinian local consciousness. In a tradition he labels as “urban patriotism”, it is common that Palestinians have an awareness and pride in their family’s cities and hometowns, which is evidenced by the use of city names as family names. Also, Palestinians developed similar attachments to their villages, “including pride in the village as special and better than others.” Both trends are still found in Palestinian communities, even those living outside the territory. This is evidenced by how people can be “easily identified as to their place of origin by their family name”⁴³.

A broader territorial consciousness also influenced the construction of a Palestinian identity. Palestine came to be defined as a member of the Arab region, and Palestinians recognized themselves as belonging to the Arab community. Thus, when the leaders of the Palestinian national project conceptualized a Palestinian state, it was “self-defined as an exclusively Arab state”⁴⁴. By the mid-twentieth century, a Palestinian national consciousness had developed, creating a collective identity that was characterized by a local, familial, and religious connection to the homeland, which was then rooted in a greater Arab community.

A devastating yet defining component of Palestinian national awareness came with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. This event is recognized as “Al

⁴² Newman (1999), 12.

⁴³ Khalidi, 153.

⁴⁴ Falah and Newman, 701.

Nakba”, or “The Catastrophe” by Palestinians, and has come to represent “the loss of the homeland, the disintegration of society, the frustration of national aspirations, and the [...] destruction of their culture”⁴⁵. This collective trauma framed the development of a Palestinian national identity, and has since remained a central component of Palestinian collective narratives. In particular, three consequences of Al Nakba continue to influence Palestinian identity: loss of the homeland, the state of exile and dispersion, and the struggle to return to the homeland⁴⁶.

The loss of physical control of the land for Palestinians resulted in more than just loss of territorial authority. For many, Al Nakba has come to represent the denial of Palestinian existence and identity. The “others” who gained control transformed the landscape of Palestine, changing Arabic names of places to Hebrew or European names. Hundreds of villages were destroyed during the course of the War of 1948, and the Palestinian population was replaced by new Israeli residents⁴⁷. Popular rhetoric in the early years of the State of Israel denied the existence of a people who lived in Palestine before the establishment of the State, and further refused to use the word “Palestinian”.

The existential dilemma presented to the Palestinian nation after 1948 was complicated by the dispersion of the majority of the Palestinian population from their original homes. The society that had once retained a deep sense of belonging to a local

⁴⁵ Sa’ di, Ahmad H, “Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a Component of Palestinian Identity,” *Israel Studies* 7.2 (2002), 175.

⁴⁶ Yiftachel, 230.

⁴⁷ Sa’ di 184-185.

and broader community now faced the division of cities, villages, and families and their resettlement in other countries. Consequently, in the Palestinian national consciousness, Al Nakba represents the moment when “the Palestinian people became homeless; after which they could never feel at home. These Palestinians have been deprived of everything home signifies and provides...the place of intimacy, closeness, privacy, warmth, informality, and happiness”⁴⁸. A sense of exile from the physical land and from the emotional homeland has become a prominent characteristic of the Palestinian ethos after 1948.

The event of Al Nakba is what author Ahmad Sa’di, in a study of Palestinian identity, calls: “a site of Palestinian collective memory; it connects all Palestinians to a specific point in time that has become for them an ‘eternal past’”⁴⁹. The history of Palestine before 1948 has become a focus of the Palestinian national narrative; and the attempt to affirm and recreate that history is part of the Palestinian efforts for national ‘return’. An excerpt from the text of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, a document written for the symbolic establishment of a Palestinian “state” by the Palestinian Liberation Organization reflects this connection to the past and future homeland:

Palestine is where the Palestinian Arab people was born, on which it grew, developed and excelled...In Palestine and in exile, the Palestinian

⁴⁸ Sa’di 181.

⁴⁹ Sa’di, 177.

Arab people never faltered and never abandoned its conviction in its rights of Return and independence and the right of sovereignty over territory and homeland...⁵⁰

Within this context, the emotional dimensions of homeland are apparent. The homeland for Palestinians is a place where their present of dispossession, exile, oppression and unrecognized national aspirations are forgotten. It is a Palestinian space, one where existential worries and national hardships are absent. It is a place rooted in the religious, cultural, social and local connection to the land; a place that has never occurred, but tied to a concrete collective past and grounded in a distinct territory. This connection to a past and a national homeland is a socially constructed process, in part promoted by the political leadership of Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories. Evan Weiss summarizes the efforts made in the Palestinian education system to teach children this national narrative:

Palestinian children learn that they have a common cultural heritage in which they should take pride and that they have a homeland from which they derive their livelihood. However, it is also inculcated in them that they have common struggles against a common enemy...the Jews.⁵¹

Thus, Palestinian nationalism has developed from a local cultural consciousness to a national movement that claims a natural belonging to the land and seeks to gain

⁵⁰ Palestinian Declaration of Independence, 15 Nov 1988, as cited in Yiftachel 216.

⁵¹ Weiss, 82.

political control and control of a constructed and emotionally charged homeland. The return to the physical land of Palestine and the connection to a “homeland” space have resulted in a national narrative that promotes the exclusion and denial of the “other” from the territory of Israel/Palestine.

Exclusive Homeland Identity

With this discussion of Palestinian and Israeli national identities, it is clear that the concept of homeland has been constructed and developed as an emotional space that is central to belonging and collective identity. Also significant is how homeland has been linked to movements for political control over the territory. This dual understanding of homeland creates a problem of control and exclusion. Not only do both Israeli and Palestinian communities often assert their national narratives as the sole legitimate claim of the history and culture of the land, but both also struggle to obtain control over the territory identified as the national homeland-state. In this way, Palestinians and Israelis have developed a definition of their homeland, emotionally and politically, as exclusively belonging to their group⁵².

Protection of this exclusive possession of the emotional-homeland-territory has led to attempts of delegitimizing the “other’s” national narrative. The effort from both sides to refute the “other’s” identity “remains a powerful feature of the conflict, reflecting the extent to which the national identity of the other continues to be

⁵² Newman (2001), 240.

problematic to each side because it casts doubts on its own claims"⁵³. This relationship between Israeli and Palestinian identities is sometimes described as a "negative interdependence" or zero-sum: "each perceives the very existence of the other—the other's status as a nation—to be a threat to its own existence and status as a nation. Each holds the view that only one can be a nation: Either we are a nation or they are"⁵⁴.

Negative interdependence is identified as a "psychological core" of the conflict, affecting the perception of the "other" in regards to their identity and their territorial claims⁵⁵. In terms of political control, negative interdependence requires systematic efforts to delegitimize and exclude the "other" in order to reduce the power that the "other" gains. Regarding the conception of emotional-homeland, negative interdependence leads to denying the "other's" historical and cultural identification with the land, which undermines the total role of the homeland and results in a process of asserting exclusive legitimacy.

The duality of the emotional-homeland-territory and the resulting exclusion has promoted the continuation of the often violent Israel/Palestine conflict. However, the exclusion that has developed as a part of Israeli and Palestinian national identities is not an intrinsic component of identity. The tension between ingroups and their respective outgroups or "other"-groups is not a necessary component of identity construction or

⁵³ Kelman, Herbert C. "The Political Psychology of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: How Can We Overcome the Barriers to a Negotiated Solution?" *Political Psychology* 8.3 (1987), 355.

⁵⁴ Kelman, (1999), 588.

⁵⁵ Kelman (1987), 354.

structure. In a review of literature concerning ingroup and outgroup negative reciprocity, Marilynn Brewer proposes that while the zero-sum perspective may be applicable in certain situations, it should not be assumed as inevitable. She defines the ingroup-outgroup connection as “the product of opposing needs for inclusion (assimilation) and differentiation from others...equilibrium is achieved through identification with distinctive social groups that meet both needs simultaneously”. This explanation of the relationship between the groups “carries no implicit link between ingroup formation and intergroup hostility or conflict”⁵⁶.

Palestinians and Israelis have constructed an emotional notion of homeland and tied it to political control of a territory. This identity structure leads to exclusion of the “other” —from the physical territory and also by denying the “other’s” claim to a cultural homeland. While this is currently the condition, the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians does not necessarily lead to negative-interdependence and identity exclusion. Rather, it is a consequence of the duality of homeland as a national state and an emotional space. With the recognition that hostility between the groups is not inherent on a psychological level comes the implication that negative-interdependence and exclusion can be overcome. What is necessary is a change within each community that will redefine aspects of national identity in order for the practice of exclusion to cease.

⁵⁶ Brewer, Marilynn B, “The Many Faces of Social Identity: Implications for Political Psychology,” Political Psychology 22.1 (Mar. 2001), 434.

Redefining the National Homeland

Any lasting method of conflict resolution and reconciliation developed in Israel/Palestine will need to reduce elements that fuel the continuation of conflict, such as exclusion, while recognizing essential components of Palestinian and Israeli identity, such as homeland. The homeland has been established as a critical component of collective national identity, held sacred by Palestinians and Israelis alike. It is a constructed concept that fulfills psychological needs of a group by providing a sense of collective community, attachment, identity and security. As such, protecting the emotional, identity dimension of the homeland is essential. Given the history of how each group constructed and established the concept of homeland, perhaps altering the dual perception of homeland is one of the necessary changes needed for conflict reconciliation to occur.

While both Palestinian and Israeli homelands have ties to the same territory, the constructed nature of homeland and the role it plays in collective identity leads to the conclusion that national attachment to the homeland does not necessitate political control of that land. Homeland can be constructed as an emotional space that is not bound to exclusive control of a specific territory. As such, the homeland would serve as a foundation for social interaction with the national group, would help affirm and secure national identity, and would still be attached to time, place and history.

However, as an emotional space and not a concrete, bound, political territory or state, the “homeland” would thereby be inclusive for a national group without entailing exclusion of another community. This “imagined space” of the national community would still retain connection to the land; for example, Israelis could maintain national significance in religious sites in Judea and Samaria, while Palestinians retell the importance of olive groves in their national narrative of the same space. The essential difference of this emotional-space construction of a homeland would be divorcing the concept of “homeland” from “state” and exclusionary political control.

By re-conceptualizing the homeland to be a national space encompassing all that is important for the identity of the nation, rather than grounding the concept of homeland in necessary political control, both Palestinians and Israelis will have taken steps to promote genuine reconciliation. If each national group creates a homeland space to satisfy their group’s need for a basis of national community and identity, then this fulfills the psychological need for a homeland while expanding political resolution potential and reducing contested elements of conflict. As a space rather than a bound, controlled territory, it is possible for homelands to overlap and even share the same physical place in their national narratives without leading to a contest for control. This will encourage the rejection of the exclusive claims of territory. Homeland re-conceptualized as a national space rather than a territory allows for citizens of the political state to live jointly while identifying with different national narratives of

homeland. This is a reflection of the concept of identity transcendence—creating a superordinate identity that does not conflict with national identities but rather “supplements” identities.

Conceptually, if the homeland is no longer understood by the national groups as exclusively territorial, Palestinians and Israelis will be one step closer to recognizing the legitimacy of the “other’s” claim to the land. Adjusting perceptions of homeland and territorial attachment can lead to “shared places and spaces, with neither claiming exclusive territorial control over all, or part, of the area”⁵⁷. These inclusive conceptions of space would encourage a new relationship between Israelis and Palestinians. If large-scale shifts of collective identity are necessary before a conflict resolution can occur⁵⁸, redefining the national homeland can play a role in accelerating the development of a transcendent identity by reducing the negative interdependence of the parties⁵⁹. Kelman (1999) states, “A long-term resolution of the conflict requires development of a transcendent identity for the two peoples that does not threaten the particularistic identity of each”⁶⁰. While political policy proposals are outside of the scope of this paper, the creation of a superordinate, encompassing identity for Israelis and Palestinians typically implies the recognition of a one-state solution. The redefinition of homeland offers the potential for such a transcendent identity to be

⁵⁷ Kelman (2001), 241.

⁵⁸ Hammack, 348.

⁵⁹ Kelman (1999), 581.

⁶⁰ Kelman (1999), 581.

born—by allowing for the attachment of a national homeland that is removed from control of territory, Palestinians and Israelis will have the foundation to build a new collective identity that recognizes and respects their differences while encouraging the growth of common aspects of identity.

Conclusion

Homeland is an essential component of collective national identity—it allows the consolidation of a common history, and it invokes feelings of belonging and existential security. In Palestine-Israel, however, concepts of homeland have been constructed as connected to physical control of the territory, thus denying the “other’s” notion of homeland and excluding the “other” from the territory. This exclusion is typical in similar situations of violent, existential conflicts; however, exclusion is not necessary. Ingroup-outgroup relations allow for identity distinction, but do not require hostility. The definition of homeland as a territory to control and as an emotional space promotes hostility creating a situation that requires the exclusion of the “other” for any national gains. Redefinition of the homeland as a national space, removed from territorial control, protects national identity while reducing elements of exclusion. This would allow for a new relationship to develop between Palestinians and Israelis. In terms of conflict resolution, redefining the homeland could spur necessary shifts in collective identity by realizing that accepting the “other’s” legitimate claim to the land does not diminish one’s own roots.

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